

Promotion of Education.

From the able speech of Hon. W. F. Prosser, M. C. from the Nashville District, delivered in the House of Representatives on the 25th of January, 1870, we make the following extracts, to which we invite the attention of the friends of education:

Mr. Prosser.—Mr. Speaker, it is to me a matter of the most profound surprise and regret that a subject of such infinite importance, especially to a Republic like our own, should have been so long and so entirely neglected by the Government of the United States. Elsewhere, outside of our own country, no subject has of late received a larger share of public attention or been the object of more specific legislation. Every civilized nation on the face of the globe has in operation to-day a system of public instruction more or less efficient, except the United States. Yet the prime value, the absolute necessity of popular education to ourselves more than any other people on the face of the earth, I presume all will acknowledge.

"MAN BECOMES WHAT HE IS BY HIS EDUCATION."

Nearly every wise man who has lived during the last two thousand years and whose opinions have been preserved to us by the use of letters has reaffirmed, in terms which only gather weight and force with each succeeding century, the sentiment Plato had already expressed, "Man becomes what he is principally by his education." So, coming down to our own day, and under a free Government where each individual stands upon his merits, the sentiment so well expressed by the English philosopher, Locke, is even more forcibly illustrated, that—

"Of all the men we meet, nine out of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education."

RELIGION DEPENDS ON EDUCATION.

The morality of the people, nay, religion itself, depends for existence upon the education of the people. Justice, charity, and all the virtues must be taught, and the pupil must be measurably educated to receive these primary ethics, the foundation upon which all religion is built. This idea doubtless led Goldsmith to declare, "I will be bold enough to say that schoolmasters in a State are more necessary than clergymen, as children stand in need of more instruction than their parents." The sentiments of religion and morality, even the existence of a God, must be taught. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," said Moses among his parting injunctions to the children of Israel when they were about to enter the promised land, referring to all the sacred commandments and wise rules for their guidance which he had from time to time committed to them. The attainment of the summit of their desires as a nation, the reward of their forty years in the wilderness, was not sufficient. The children must be taught diligently in order to secure the permanence of their prosperity as a nation. And who can doubt that their vitality as a people to this day is largely owing to the thorough education they have given their children?

EDUCATION MAKES THE NATION.

So all there is of a nation that is good, that is mighty, that exercises influence, that is admirable in any respect, is the product of the education of its citizens; for it is not the numbers of human beings comprised under one form of government, nor the extent or fertility of the territory they occupy, nor the wealth which makes a nation. Its people may be as numerous as the Chinese; they may occupy a continent fertile as a garden and containing mountains of precious and useful metals; they may have much native force, yet if they lack the potent agent of education, which renders all material things available, they fall short of the power and influence they should possess. Whatever may be the distinctions in any country upon which rank is founded, the rank that a nation occupies among the powers of the earth will be found to rest upon the practical education of the people.

ITS IMPORTANCE RECOGNIZED BUT NOT REALIZED.

While the general importance of educating the people is acknowledged by every reasonable person, nearly all fail to realize that the intelligence of the masses is of vital importance to a Republic, the only foundation upon which it can stand. As Montesquieu has well expressed it: "Education makes the man; that alone is the parent of every virtue; it is the most sacred, the most useful, and at the same time the most neglected thing in every country."

CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY.

Such being the primary importance of education, what is the condition of our people in respect to it; and is our country keeping up with contemporary nations, and the spirit of the age? The answer to this question discloses facts which should, and will, no doubt, astonish and arouse every liberty-loving legislator to action; for they are melancholy in their nature, they are startling in their character.

Sir, familiar with the fact that a large amount of ignorance and apathy existed on the subject, I was startled when I came to examine the statistics bearing upon the question, knowing that there can be no security to the liberties of the people so long as this dangerous element of ignorance exists in the community, to an extent, as nearly as can be estimated, of about one-fourth or one-fifth of the whole number. "The greatest despotism on earth," says Dr. Tocqueville, "is an excited untought public sentiment," a truth already too well illustrated to-day among the ignorant masses in New York.

With a form of government which can only exist, as the Jewish proverb hath it, "By the breath of its school children;" a government, indeed, so dependent upon the intelligence of the people that any ignorant man who approaches the polls carrying a ballot he cannot read is a risk to it and a menace against it; yet we are, as I remarked before, almost, if not quite, the only civilized nation on the face of the earth that possesses no national system of public schools.

LOOK AT EUROPE.

The first in rank among the great divisions of the world and containing forty-five different States. Every one of them has a national system of education, and by far the greater number make it compulsory upon parents to send their children to school. I abstract the following from the most reliable sources:

EDUCATION IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Great Britain has a national system, the main features of which are parliamentary grants to popular education and a regular

course of inspection of schools. The grants from 1839 to 1866, for England, Wales and Scotland alone, amounted to £6,710,862 sterling, or \$32,470,572. These grants were made entirely for the benefit of that class of people supported by manual labor, and such national expenditures in behalf of education are in rebuking contrast to the feeble effort we have made in establishing an educational department without investing it with dignity or endowing it with means necessary to the practical and efficient discharge of duties which such a department should necessarily include. The Government of Great Britain has also published over one hundred large octavo volumes of reports and information respecting education. Indeed, the official schools inquiry commission sent to this and other countries in 1865, cost that Government more than all of our appropriations thus far for the Department of Education. Seventeen large volumes of the report of that commission have already been published for the information and benefit of the English people.

PRUSSIA.

When Prussia commenced her present system of common schools her territory was but a fraction of its present size—was the battle-field of Europe, and echoed with the tramp of invading armies. Notwithstanding her impoverished condition she undertook the work of educating her people, and in 1848 she had two and a half million children in attendance upon her schools. Twenty years later, while environed by threatening empires, she arose in the power of superior education, reconstructed the map of Europe, and placed herself in the front rank of the nations of that part of the world, who were astonished at the brilliancy of her statesmen and the skill of her armies.

THE RATIO OF ILLITERATE CITIZENS INCREASING.

Our own States and Territories present the startling fact that there is an annually increasing ratio of ignorance, and that we have now within our borders more than four million illiterate adults, to whom the twenty-six letters of the alphabet are as meaningless as so many Chinese hieroglyphics.

Our census reports first took cognizance of the number of illiterate persons over twenty years of age in 1840, when it was found that one in thirteen of the free adult population of the country could not read or write. In 1850 the number had increased to one in nine of the free adult persons in the country. Ten years ago, of our 13,634,033 free adult population, 1,218,011 were reported illiterate, to which if we add the 1,745,140 adults who were then slaves we have the aggregate of 2,963,151 wholly unable to read and write. In 1860 half of our population were either side of twenty years of age; therefore we should take the adolescent illiterate into account in order to arrive at the true condition of our people.

A STATISTICIAN'S OPINION.

It is the opinion of Dr. Lee, who has carefully prepared statistical tables and maps under the direction of the Department of Education, that—

"There must be, and is, a still larger number, more than three million young persons, who are growing up in ignorance to fill the ranks of the illiterate as older ones pass off the stage. So that more than six millions!"

In 1860, or seven millions now—

"of the American people constitute a bookless class, shut out from direct access to this main source of knowledge, not counting the million and a half children under ten years of age who cannot yet be said to be illiterate, though they are on the high road to it unless something more efficient is promptly done to save them."

With this vast army of illiterates we go into a new decade, to which are annually added about one hundred and sixty thousand who yearly reach the age of twenty-one, half of whom are exercising the privilege of suffrage and have a direct voice in the destiny of the Republic.

THE SOUTH—ITS 2,340,500 ADULTS ILLITERATE.

But if the results of national neglect of the interests of education in the District of Columbia and the Territories are deplorable, how much more serious are its consequences in the Southern States, where there never has been any efficient system of public schools in operation since the first settlement of the country? No demonstration is needed to prove that the difficulties and dangers through which we as a nation have passed during the past fifty years would have been avoided had a thorough system of universal education been introduced and carried into effect in the early days of the Republic. The want of such a system has resulted in a civil war whose cost in blood and treasure is beyond comprehension; a large population destitute of intelligence; a large portion of the Union not only without free schools, but with a strong sentiment of hostility to their introduction. Yet the most effective measure of reconstruction which could be adopted would be an efficient system of education. It is estimated that there are not less than two millions of the youthful population of the South without the means of obtaining even the rudiments of education. During the past year the State of Pennsylvania expended more for schools within her limits than twice the amount expended in all the Southern States put together; yet the Governor of that State complains that there are seventy-five thousand children in his jurisdiction still unprovided for. The Governor of Wisconsin says that notwithstanding the efficiency of the school system in that State there are fifty thousand children not attending any school whatever. And if our system of public schools is so far from perfection where it is most fully developed, as compared with those countries where education is compulsory, what must it be in those parts of the Union where there are no free schools established—where the poorer classes are profoundly ignorant, with no desire for improvement, and where the rich are largely opposed to their advancement? In 1860 there were in the South 2,340,659 adults over twenty years of age who could neither read nor write, while the North, with two-thirds of the population of the country, had but 622,792; yet this vast army of illiterates has a direct voice in the affairs of the Government and in the control of the country.

THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU AN OASIS.

But, to turn from subjects which so reproach us to a scintilla of brightness in the acts of the Government, the school depart-

ment of the Freedmen's Bureau, now about to close, is a pertinent illustration of what may be accomplished by such a bill as I propose. During the period of about four years the small amount of some \$2,000,500 has been expended in the building, renting, and repairing of school-houses, the purchase of books and apparatus, and the pay of inspectors, superintendents, and teachers; yet the results are that they leave in the field 2,118 schools, containing 114,522 pupils, or about one-tenth of the children of the freedmen, who, let us hope, will by these means acquire a modicum of the elementary instruction the Government owes them. Add to this the number of adults who have received instruction, and the number of pupils who have received benefit from this small amount of money is swelled to a quarter of a million.

Thus an energetic bureau—for having seen I can testify to its value and efficiency—adopting a wise system of rules, by constant inspection requiring schools assisted by them to keep up to the standard, may render effectual to the accomplishment of much good a mere trifle; not more than the War and Navy Departments almost annually waste in futile experiments.

THE IMMENSE DOMAIN GRANTED.

Yet Congress has been lavish in appropriating public domain for educational purposes. The land granted for this object at various times in the different States and Territories already amounts to 78,776,962 acres. This vast area is 123,776 square miles. It is nearly equal in extent to the Kingdom of Prussia, greater than Great Britain and Ireland, more than half the extent of the French Empire, equal to an area twice the size of the State of Illinois with ten States the size of Delaware thrown in, or twenty-six times the size of Connecticut. This noble tribute to so important an object lies scattered in mile-square plots over the most fertile and beautiful portions of God's green earth, and had it been properly conserved would have produced, it is estimated, a grand national school fund of \$500,000,000. The interest of this would have been a magnificent endowment for the entire scholastic population of the United States.

In 1870 the English Commissioners for Foreign Plantations addressed to the Governors of the several colonies a series of questions concerning the condition of the settlements under their charge. One of questions related to the means of popular education. The Governor of Connecticut replied to the royal commissioners as follows:

"One fourth of the annual revenue of the colony is laid out in maintaining free schools for the education of our children."

The Governor of Virginia replied: "I thank God there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years."

So far as free schools are concerned his hope was more than realized, and I have been recently informed by one of the framers of the new constitution of Virginia, an old and very intelligent citizen of that State, whose opinion is founded upon an intimate knowledge of its people, that the provisions incorporated therein for the maintenance of common schools, which are precisely the same as those in the State of New York, are even more obnoxious to the element which has hitherto ruled and ruined that State than the "iron-clad oath" or universal suffrage.

IGNORANCE THE CAUSE OF VIRGINIA'S MISFORTUNES.

The history of Virginia as a State in the Union exhibits a continual increase in the percentage of illiterates to her whole population, as far as we can learn, until, as shown by the census of 1840, she had 58,787 free persons over the age of twenty who could not read and write. Unheeding this fearful record, she kept her downward course, and ten years later she had 88,520 illiterate free persons over the age of twenty. Neither States nor individuals can escape the consequences of their crimes. The compensation of Virginia has been terrible; she fell from sovereignty, became the battle-ground between States, civil strife desolated her fields even in view of the national Capitol, and she is now but just regaining an equal footing with the other States on this floor.

This history of Virginia illustrates that of the remaining fifteen Southern States. In 1860 they contained but twenty-eight per cent. of the free native population of the whole thirty-four States, but so unequal had been the previous rate of educational development, to such an extent had they monopolized the ignorance of the country, they had in their free native population sixty-seven per cent. of all the adult native illiterates in the United States. In other words, with only about one-third of the free population of the nation, they possessed more than two-thirds of its illiterates; not including the slaves, which, if added, would have swelled the proportion to more than nine-tenths in the South for every seven in the North.

It is not a singular coincidence, to say the least, that of the original thirteen States which formed this Union but one has entirely failed to make some constitutional provision for education, and that that one has led in two unsuccessful attempts to disintegrate the nation and subvert the free principles upon which it is founded? I need not name the State to indicate the one to which I refer. On the other hand, two centuries and nearly a half ago the general court of the colony of Massachusetts enacted a school code ordaining a school to be established in every township that might number five families. One hundred and forty years later, when a State constitution was framed, one of its sections read: "Wisdom and knowledge, as well virtue, diffused generally among the bodies of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties, and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country and among different orders of people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature and magistrates in all future periods of this Commonwealth to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences," &c.

Sir, if when the State first referred to fired upon Fort Sumter, the latter State had not marshaled regiments to defend this capital, would the life and liberty of the nation have been preserved to-day? The passage of a law providing for a national system of schools would seem but an act of national thanksgiving.

By a contrast of the illiteracy existing previous to the rebellion in some of the States North and South of Mason and Dixon's line, whose population were about equal, the real causes which led to our late

domestic disturbance may be more clearly perceived.

Take Maine and Alabama. The former had 1 illiterate in 251; the latter 1 in 14 of the white native population.

Take Wisconsin and South Carolina. The former had 1 in 285; the latter 1 in 4.

Take Connecticut and Maryland. The former had 1 in 488; the latter 1 in 9.

Take Massachusetts and my own State of Tennessee. The former had 1 in 600; Tennessee 1 in 6; or Massachusetts had only 2,004, while Tennessee had 180,983 native adult illiterates.

THE SPECIAL HINDERANCES

to a voluntary system of education in some sections are: the absence of educational sentiment; in the South the repugnance of the wealthy classes to be taxed for the support of a system of schools which includes their former slaves; the sparse population in most of the agricultural regions. In the New England and Northern States, public sentiment is such that the parent who withholds education from his child becomes a conspicuous object of contempt, and it is thus as much a matter of course that the children should go to school, at least a part of the year, as it is in the South that they should stay at home. A prominent and well-known successful candidate for the United States Senate in one of the Southern States, expressed the sentiments of many of the politicians of the South when he declared that "the masses ought not to be educated, because no sooner does a man learn his letters than he wants an office."

And in consequence of this lack of interest in the question of education, such schools and school systems as have been established, while poorly attended, are on an average little better than no schools. The following, from a recent number of the Knoxville (Tenn.) *Whig*, scarcely exaggerates the worthlessness of the school system of that State:

"For many years, the indifference of Tennessee to the work of education has been proverbial. She has manifested no concern, or comparatively none, upon the subject. She has never had, as a necessary sequence, any system of any definite plan of action. Before the war, there was a plan dignified with the appellation of 'free schools.' It was a mere sham; it had neither system nor efficiency; it provided limited means to compensate a few miserable pedagogues without education and without brains. They met in log cabins and snored their precious time away, while the children amused themselves by tickling them with straws. For three or four months in the year, these schools served to contribute to the mirthful pleasure of the youth, and especially to their moral and intellectual ruin."

Says Daniel Webster: "The power over education is one of the powers of public police belonging essentially to government. It is one of those powers the exercise of which is indispensable to the preservation of society, to its integrity and its healthy action."

"It is evident, therefore, that popular cultivation, as diffusive and general as the numbers composing the Republic, is indispensable to the preservation of our Republican forms, and hence arises the great constitutional duty of the Government. It is the duty of self-preservation, according to its actual mode of existence, for the sake of the common good."

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Circuit Court—Clinton.

BILL FOR DIVORCE.
State of Tennessee—Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Anderson county—Term at Clinton, April 8, 1870.

John Herald, complainant, against Nancy J. Herald, defendant.

IT APPEARING FROM AFFIDAVIT FILED IN this cause that defendant Nancy J. Herald has fled to parts unknown: It is therefore ordered that she enter her appearance herebefore or within the first three days of the next Term of said Court, to be held on the second Monday of July, 1870, and plead, answer or demur to complainant's bill, or the same will be taken for confessed as to her and set for hearing ex parte; and that a copy of this order be published for four consecutive weeks in the *Knoxville Chronicle*.
ap13-4w L. C. COX, Clerk Circuit Court.

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